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134th Public Affairs Detachment, Alaska Army National Guard

Alaska National Guard engineers provide damage assessment during disaster response exercise

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — Exercise Alaska Shield and Vigilant Guard-Alaska 2014 kicked off at 10:10 a.m. yesterday when a mock earthquake with a magnitude of 9.2 occurred in Jonah Bay in Prince William Sound.

Vigilant Guard-Alaska 2014 is a regional, tactically focused exercise that is focused on the response and recovery from a major earthquake and tsunami. The exercise is designed to test the response capabilities of local and state authorities and their ability to work together during a disaster.

Alaska National Guardsmen from the 208th Construction Management Team and the 207th Engineer Support Platoon were notified that as part of the simulation, Alaska's Governor Sean Parnell declared a state of emergency disaster, activated the National Guard and implemented the state emergency plan.

"We're tasked today with providing damage assessment throughout the Mat-Su Borough, in support of the Mat-Su Emergency Operation Center," said Maj. Mark Kelliher, commander of the 208th Construction Management Team. "This includes verifying that the critical infrastructure is operational and sending those initial reports through Orion™ software."

The engineers mobilized to meet with Mat-Su Borough representatives at three local cities: Palmer, Wasilla and Houston.

Casey Cook, Emergency Manager with the Mat-Su Borough Department of Emergency Services, briefed local responders and Alaska Guardsmen at the Central Mat-Su Fire Department, Station 6-5 in the Cottonwood Public Safety Building.

"Our mission is to get information and turn it into intelligence that we can use to plan for further operational periods," said Cook.

In the scenario, local infrastructures such as bridges, roads, homes and businesses were damaged.

The engineers responded to simulated damage sites and reported the findings back to an EOC using a mobile application.

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"Using this software, we can send pictures and damage descriptions to our operations center in real time," said Cook. "We can also upload those to the state or FEMA operations center.

They can then use real-world knowledge to start planning for their response to the local communities."

Orion™, a mobile system by Futurity, allows first responders to collect critical damage assessment data necessary for emergency agencies to coordinate and deploy resources.

Cook said the data collected allows agencies to determine how they can provide local residents with items such as food, shelter and water.

"This training is beneficial to the Alaska National Guard because we are able to work with other state agencies in preparation for a disaster event in Alaska," Kelliher said.

Approximately 1,150 Air and Army National Guardsmen from Alaska, Hawaii, Ore., Wash., Neb., Wis., Ariz., Calif., Nev., Idaho, Minn., N.D. and Utah are set to participate in AS/VG-AK14 across the state, from March 27 through April 2.

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Photo cutlines

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Alaska National Guardsmen from the 208th Construction Management Team and the 207th Engineer Support Platoon, conduct training mobile assessment training with Rob Richard, chief executive officer, Futurity Information Technology, during exercise Alaska Shield and Vigilant Guard 2014, Wasilla, Alaska. Vigilant Guard is a component of the state-wide exercise Alaska Shield, from March 27 through April 2. The exercise simulates a large-scale earthquake and tsunami and is designed to test state and local civil authorities capabilities. U.S. Army National Guard Photo by Sgt. Michelle Brown

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Maj. Mark Kelliher, commander, 208th Construction Management Team, briefs members of the 208th CMT and the 207th Engineer Support Platoon, during exercise Alaska Shield and Vigilant Guard 2014, Wasilla, Alaska. Vigilant Guard is a component of the state-wide exercise Alaska Shield, from March 27 through April 2. The engineers responded to simulated damage sites and reported the findings back to an emergency operation center using a mobile application. U.S. Army National Guard Photo by Sgt. Michelle Brown

140327- Z- MZ867-016

Alaska National Guardsmen from the 207th Engineer Support Platoon use a mobile application to respond to simulated damage sites during exercise Alaska Shield and Vigilant Guard 2014, Wasilla, Alaska. The engineers reported the findings back to an emergency operation center using a mobile application. Vigilant Guard is a component of the state-wide exercise Alaska Shield, from March 27 through April 2. U.S. Army National Guard Photo by Sgt. Michelle Brown